

Request for Proposals – National Conference for Watershed Organizations Receiving Grants Under EPA’s Watershed Initiative (WSI)

AGENCY: Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

ACTION: Request for Proposals

SUMMARY: This notice announces the availability of funds from EPA’s Office of Wetlands, Oceans, and Watersheds. EPA is soliciting proposals from non-profit organizations, colleges and universities to provide an annual national conference in calendar years 2003, 2004, and 2005 for the watershed organizations receiving grants under EPA’s Watershed Initiative in each of those years. The purpose of these conferences is to convene up to two representatives from each of the selected watershed organizations to provide them with training and support to better restore, protect and manage their watersheds, and to help position them to teach other watershed groups by their example. This agreement will have a project period of no more than four years. EPA anticipates an award of up to \$50,000 in year 1, \$60,000 in year 2, and \$75,000 in year 3, with a total award not to exceed \$185,000.

EPA expects to select one candidate to receive a cooperative agreement to be the lead non-Federal co-sponsor for these three Watershed Initiative conferences. The locations and dates for all three conferences will be determined jointly by EPA and the successful applicant.

DATES/DEADLINES:

1. The deadline for receipt of proposals is 12pm Eastern Daylight Savings time on June 13, 2003. Proposals received after this deadline will not be considered.
2. EPA will notify the selected applicant by telephone and email the week of June 16, 2003. The selected applicant may be asked to modify their work plan and budget. EPA will notify, in writing, those applicants that were not selected within 60 days of receiving applications.
3. Final work plans and required forms will need to be received from the selected applicant by 12pm, Eastern Daylight Savings time, June 25, 2003.

WHERE TO APPLY:

Since postal mail delays are to be expected that could inordinately delay EPA’s receipt of applications, EPA strongly encourages applicants to use an express courier service (e.g., Fed-Ex, Airborne Express, United Parcel Service, etc.) or other private courier service to deliver applications to the address below. **Deliver signed original AND three hard copies of each proposal you submit to this address:**

Attention: Macara Lousberg
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Room 7136G, EPA West Building
1301 Constitution Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20004

(202) 564-1308 (phone number for courier to use, if requested)

If applicants choose to submit applications via standard or express mail service, please **mail signed original AND three hard copies of the proposal to this address:**

Attention: Macara Lousberg
U.S. EPA (4501T)
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20460

NOTE: Do NOT submit applications in any type of binder.

CONTACT FOR FURTHER INFORMATION AND PRE-APPLICATION ASSISTANCE:
Macara Lousberg; U.S. EPA, Office of Wetlands, Oceans, and Watersheds. Phone: (202) 566-1308; e-mail lousberg.macara@epa.gov.

UPDATES TO THIS REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS: Please periodically refer to the EPA website containing this Request For Proposals (RFP) for possible postings of supplemental information relevant to applying for this cooperative agreement. The URL for this RFP is: <http://www.epa.gov/owow/watershed/initiative/>.

STATUTORY AND REGULATORY AUTHORITY: Clean Water Act (CWA) §104(b)(3) authorizes the Agency to award grants to conduct and promote the coordination and acceleration of activities such as demonstrations, training, education, experiments, investigations, surveys, studies, and research relating to the causes, effect, extent, prevention, reduction, and elimination of water pollution.

Eligible nonprofit organizations include any organizations that meet the definition of a nonprofit in Section 4(6) of the Federal Financial Management Assistance Act of 1999, Public Law 106-107, 31 U.S.C. 6101 Note. This definition includes nonprofit universities and educational institutions. However, nonprofit organizations described in Section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code that engage in lobbying activities as defined in Section 3 of the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995 are not eligible to apply. For profit institutions are not eligible.

See OMB Circular A-122 <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/circulars/a122/a122.html> and OMB Circular A-21 <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/circulars/a021/a021.html>).

Refer to the regulations cited in 40 CFR Part 30 Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and Other Non-profit Organizations: http://www.access.gpo.gov/nara/cfr/waisidx_01/40cfr30_01.html

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

I. BACKGROUND

On January 25, 2002, EPA announced a new competitive grant program to encourage successful community-based approaches and techniques to protect and restore America's waters. In 2003, Congress appropriated \$15 million to support this Watershed Initiative. On May 2, 2003, EPA announced the selection of twenty watersheds to receive grants under this program. EPA's goal in targeting these grants to specific watersheds is to advance the successes of partnerships and coalitions that have already undertaken the necessary watershed evaluations and assessments and have a technically sound watershed plan ready to carry out.

EPA is soliciting proposals to provide an annual national conference in calendar years 2003-2005, co-sponsored by EPA, for the watershed organizations selected to receive Watershed Initiative grants in fiscal years 2003, 2004 and 2005. The purpose of these conferences is to convene up to two representatives from each of the selected watershed organizations to provide them with training and support to better restore, protect and manage their watersheds, and to help position them to teach other watershed groups by their example.

The goals of this conference are to:

- Transfer information about innovative technical tools available for watershed restoration, protection and management, and where to get more information at the federal, state, tribal and local levels.
- Provide training to improve the ability of conference attendees to take better advantage of federal programs in implementing their WSI projects, *e.g.* integration and use of Clean Water Act and Safe Drinking Water Act tools.
- Plan for translating individual project successes into models to be replicated by other local watershed organizations across the country.
- Provide for peer to peer learning opportunities to share successful approaches among grant recipients.

II. REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

EPA will review and evaluate proposals based upon the applicant's ability to meet the evaluation factors stated in "A" below, and other selection factors. This program is competitive, and eligible non-profit organizations, universities and colleges that can demonstrate that they meet the evaluation factors may apply.

EPA anticipates that this award will be a cooperative agreement for co-sponsored conferences. Cooperative agreements, unlike grants, provide for substantial involvement on the part of the federal government. By awarding a cooperative agreement, EPA anticipates substantial involvement in conference activities. EPA will be in contact with the cooperative agreement recipient through routinely scheduled conference calls, as well as ad-hoc e-mails, faxes, site visits, and any other necessary communications. For this award, EPA will also abide by the October 1996 Guidance on Co-Sponsoring Conferences contained in EPA Ethics Advisory 96-15. The recipient must cooperate with EPA to facilitate compliance with this ethics guidance and all other ethics rules.

This RFP is for an estimated \$185,000 award for a four year cooperative agreement. EPA will incrementally fund this cooperative agreement on a year to year basis at approximately \$50,000 the first year, \$60,000 the second year, and \$75,000 the third year. Approval of funding increments in years 2 and 3 is dependent on satisfactory project progress, continued relevance of the project to EPA's priorities, and availability of funds. The recipient must submit annual work plans and budgets for EPA's discretionary approval each subsequent year.

A. EVALUATION, SELECTION, AND AWARD PROCESS

EPA will establish a national review panel consisting of Federal employees familiar with conference planning and the needs of watershed partnerships. Each individual on the national review panel will score applications using the evaluation factors listed below. Applications will be ranked according to average score. Rankings alone, however, will not be the sole determining factor. The panel will consider additional selection factors in addition to rankings. For example, EPA may choose an applicant that has expertise in particular kinds of watershed issues, such as urban or rural issues, or expertise in particular types of innovative watershed management tools and approaches, such as trading. The final selection will be made by EPA senior management, and EPA will work with the successful applicant to comply with the Intergovernmental review requirements of Executive Order 12372 and 40 CFR Part 29. Any disputes regarding proposals or applications submitted in response to these guidelines will be resolved in accordance with 40 CFR 30.63 and Part 31, subpart F. EPA reserves the right to reject all applications and make no awards.

EPA will evaluate proposals considering the following factors:

1. Detailed program plan which meets the goals of the conferences described in the Background Section above and clearly describes the required tasks, methodologies for accomplishing the tasks, and a reasonable time line for completing the tasks. (15 points)
2. Demonstrated experience in planning and facilitating a conference of the scope and scale described above, including both the technical and logistical aspects of conference design, management, and evaluation. (15 points)
3. Knowledge of the characteristics and needs of watershed organizations. (10 points)
4. Knowledge of innovative technical tools available for watershed restoration, protection

- and management. (10 points)
5. Demonstrated experience working with watershed organizations. (10 points)
 6. Knowledge of EPA and other federal programs relevant to restoring, protecting and managing watersheds. (10 points)
 7. Capacity of applicant to effectively manage an EPA assistance award. (10 points)
 8. Efficiency and effectiveness of budget for a conference of the size and scope described above. (10 points)
 9. Applicant's plan to evaluate and report to EPA annually, and in summary before the end of the project period, on the successes and lessons learned of its conference program, based on clearly articulated measurable outcomes. (10 points)

B. ASSEMBLING THE APPLICATION FOR THIS COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT

You must submit all of the following documents as part of your proposal in order for it to constitute a completed cooperative agreement application. Each of these blank forms can be downloaded from this web site: <http://www.epa.gov/ogd/AppKit/application.htm>. If any of the required forms are not submitted, EPA may choose to contact some applicants. Applicants should clearly mark information they consider confidential. EPA will make final confidentiality decisions in accordance with regulations at 40 CFR Part 2, Subpart B.

1. NARRATIVE STATEMENT

Project Title

Details About Your Organization

Provide the following:

- ☐ Name of organization
- ☐ Organizational address, phone, fax, email
- ☐ Mission of your organization
- ☐ Description of how this cooperative agreement will benefit your organization's mission.
- ☐ Qualifications of your organization: Describe your organization's knowledge and experience relevant to the request for proposals.
- ☐ Demonstrated ability to effectively manage a federal assistance award.

Primary and Secondary Contacts: list names, titles, addresses, office phone numbers, fax phone numbers, e-mail addresses (**IMPORTANT:** EPA will use e-mail addresses to communicate information about this RFP and during management of the assistance agreement awards). These individuals should be capable of addressing EPA's requests for additional information, if required.

Workplan

You must address the following in your Work Plan [**LIMITED TO FIVE PAGES OF CONVENTIONAL BUSINESS-TYPEFACE (COURIER, TIMES NEW ROMAN) SINGLE-SIDED, SINGLE-SPACED TEXT,**

12-POINT FONT MINIMUM, 1" BORDERS]. To ensure fair and equitable evaluation of the proposals, please do not exceed the above, single-sided page limitations. There is no guarantee that pages submitted beyond the limitations will be reviewed by the evaluation panel, and doing so could reduce your chances of a favorable rating.

1. Goals and measurable objectives.
2. Description of individual tasks, methodologies for accomplishing the tasks, and timeline and milestones for accomplishing tasks.
3. Total budget request, including any overhead (indirect cost) rates; budget increments for each of the above tasks; and budgets for project years one, two, and three. Include leveraged resources in your proposed budget, if any. If your leveraged resources are in the form of in-kind services, estimate their value. EPA does not require leveraged funds for this assistance program.
4. Describe any sources of program income you anticipate, *e.g.* training fees, publications fees, etc. All program income is to be used to perform additional training and education and is not to be used to offset federal funds that will be obligated to the assistance agreements.
5. Your plan to evaluate and report to EPA annually, and in summary before the end of the project period, on the success and lessons learned of your conference program, based on clearly articulated measurable outcomes.

Biographical Sketches of Key Staff. Keep each biographical sketch to 1 page or less.

2. DETAILED ITEMIZED BUDGET

Provide a detailed proposed budget for each project year (year 1, year 2, and year 3) and a total budget request (the sum of the budgets for all three years). This should include cost estimates for each of the proposed project activities to be conducted using EPA funds. EPA does not require that applicants include a matching or cost share. Applicants must use the budget categories presented below to organize their budget. Please note that use of EPA financial assistance compensation for consultants is limited under EPA's appropriations act to the daily equivalent of the rate paid to Federal employees at the ES-IV level. See 40 CFR 30.27(b).

Personnel: List all participants in the project by position title. Give the annual salary and the total cost over all three budget periods for all personnel listed. Record the total also on SF-424A, Section B, Line 6(a).

Fringe Benefits: Identify the percentage used, the basis for this computation, and the types of benefits included. Record also on SF-424A, Section B, line 6(b).

Travel: If travel is budgeted, show number of trips, destinations, and purpose of travel as well as anticipated costs. Record also on SF-424A, Section B, line 6(c).

Equipment: Equipment purchases are not allowed under this assistance agreement. Equipment is defined as tangible, non-expendable personal property having an estimated acquisition cost of \$5,000 or more per unit and a useful life of more than one year. Items with a unit cost of less than \$5,000 are deemed to be supplies.

Supplies: “Supplies” means all tangible personal property other than “equipment”. The budget detail should identify categories of supplies to be procured (e.g., laboratory supplies or office supplies). Record also on SF-424A, Section B, line 6(e).

Contracts: Record the total Contracts cost on SF-424A, Section B, line 6(f). As you consider your organization’s contractual needs, you may want to look at EPA’s procurement requirements under assistance agreements, 40 CFR 30.40 -30.54 <http://www.epa.gov/epahome/cfr40.htm> . For your information, the maximum hourly rate that EPA can reimburse for costs for individual consultants is limited to the maximum daily rate for a Level IV of the Executive Schedule, which is currently \$513.60 per day (\$64.20 per hour). (Both figures do not include overhead.) The portion of consultant costs above this hourly rate must be paid by your organization.

Construction: Construction Costs are not allowable for this program.

Other: List each item in sufficient detail for EPA to determine the reasonableness and allowability of its cost.

Indirect Costs: Your organization is not required to charge indirect costs. If indirect charges are budgeted, indicate the approved rate and base. Please indicate how indirect charges were calculated for this project, and remember to attach a copy of your organization’s current indirect cost rate agreement (next document noted below). If your organization does not already have an approved Indirect Cost Rate, EPA will require your organization to provide appropriate documentation to support indirect costs, if you are selected to receive an assistance agreement award. Record total indirect costs also on SF-424A, Section B, Line 6(j).

Note on Allowable Costs for this assistance agreement program: The cost principles for awards under this program will be found in OMB Circular A-122 for non-profit recipients. The related information may be viewed at: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/circulars/a122/a122.html>

3. SF-424 APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL ASSISTANCE

The SF 424 is a standard Federal form to be used by applicants as a required cover sheet for this cooperative agreement. Please note that the authorized representative is the person who is able to contract or obligate your organization to the terms and conditions of the assistance agreement. **(BE SURE TO SIGN THIS FORM, preferably with BLUE INK.)** A copy of the governing body’s authorization for you to sign this application as official representative must be on file in the applicant’s office.

NOTE: Block No. 10 requires a “Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance” (CFDA) number be entered. Use CFDA Number 66.439 for this assistance agreement program.

4. SF-424A, BUDGET INFORMATION–NON-CONSTRUCTION PROGRAMS

This is a standard Federal form used by applicants to present the cooperative agreement budget.

Complete Section B - Budget Categories - Columns (1), (2) and (5). (DO NOT fill in Sections A, C, D, E, or F.) Fill in the total requirements for funds by object class categories. Please round figures to the nearest dollar.

All applications should contain a breakdown by the relevant object class categories shown in Lines (a-h): columns (1), (2), and (5) of Section B. Some lines may not apply to your application, and no figure need be entered in that case.

- Include Federal funds in column (1)
- Include non-Federal funds in Column 2.

IMPORTANT NOTE ABOUT NON-FEDERAL FUNDS: If your organization elects to reflect non-federal funds (otherwise known as a “cost share”) in this application, the amount should be included in the budget in column 2 of this form. Note that if your organization includes the cost share in the budget, your organization is obligated to expend the funds as shown and all funds are subject to audit. Since a cost share is not required under this cooperative agreement program, it need not be listed, and your organization will not be obligated to expend those funds.

If your organization does not elect to include its cost share on the budget, make no entry in column 2.

- Put the totals in column (5).

Line 6(i) - Show the totals of lines 6(a) through 6(h) in each column.

Line 6(j) - Show the amount of indirect costs. If your organization does not already have an approved Indirect Cost Rate, you are required to provide appropriate documentation to support your indirect costs. If your organization does not have a negotiated rate with the cognizant federal agency, EPA will provide you information at the time of award on the documentation that is required to support your indirect cost rate.

Line 6(k) - Enter the total of amounts of Lines 6(i) and 6(j).

Line 7 - Enter expected program income to be generated as a direct result of your work during the performance of this cooperative agreement. EPA expects minimal program income, since EPA’s goal of this cooperative agreement is to provide free training and support to the target audience.

5. SF-424B, ASSURANCES–NON-CONSTRUCTION PROGRAMS

6. SF LLL, DISCLOSURE OF LOBBYING ACTIVITIES (as revised in 1996 -- If Applicable) Review the Certification Regarding Lobbying, cited below, to determine whether or not you need to complete the SF LLL.

7. CERTIFICATION REGARDING LOBBYING

8. FORM 5700-49, CERTIFICATION REGARDING DEBARMENT, SUSPENSION, AND OTHER RESPONSIBILITY MATTERS

9. EPA FORM 4700-4, PRE-AWARD COMPLIANCE REVIEW REPORT

10. COPY OF NEGOTIATED INDIRECT COST RATE AGREEMENT OR PROPOSAL, IF AVAILABLE (ONLY REQUIRED IF THE RECIPIENT IS CHARGING INDIRECT COSTS). If your organization does not have a negotiated indirect cost rate with a cognizant federal agency, EPA will provide you with the required documentation at the time of award.

11. KEY CONTACT INFORMATION

Please include the full name, title, address, phone number, and e-mail address of the following individuals responsible for the cooperative agreement:

- Authorized Representative - Original awards and amendments will be sent to this individual for review and acceptance, unless otherwise indicated.
- Payee - Name and Title of individual authorized to accept payments.
- Administrative Contact - individual to contact concerning administrative matters, i.e., indirect cost rate computation, re-budgeting requests, etc.

Official notification of the actual assistance agreement award will be made to the organization by EPA's Grants Administration Division in accordance with standard Agency practices.